

Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and members of the Environment Committee,

On behalf of myself and the CT cycling, I write to ask you to support Raised House Bill 5291, An Act Authorizing Bonding for Bikeways, Greenways, and Recreational Trails.

This important bill would increase the bond authorization for the Recreational Trails and Greenways Grants program to \$6 million. In Fall 2021 DEEP issued a request for recreational trails proposals with only \$3 million available. It received 65 applications requesting over \$22 million, of which the highly ranked proposals alone totaled over \$7 million. Although \$3 million was granted to twenty worthy projects, we expect the ongoing need for investments in Connecticut's outdoor recreation infrastructure to continue.

As an example, in 2019, outdoor recreation in Connecticut contributed \$3.7 billion to our GDP, \$2 billion in private sector wages and salaries, and supported over 49,000 Connecticut jobs (U.S Dept of Commerce: ORSA). Investment in trails is an economic force multiplier.

Trails are one of the best ways that bond funds can be invested. Recreational trails for hiking, running, biking, equestrian, and other uses attract and sustain families and businesses, create healthy communities, and foster a high quality of life. With towns and cities like Bentonville, Arkansas, Asheville, NC, Richmond, VA, all continuing to put money into trails and outdoor recreation, those states and communities have flourished and received more visitors and new contributing community members.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this matter.

Sincerely,

Zachary Olsen
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